

Bloomstein Report ON  
Israel 3/83

Outline of  
Report on Israel

Introductory paragraph was citing recent trips to Israel? Lebanon (report available) to several midEast countries with SI, and to Israel primarily to interview critics, anti-Begin people, and Palestinians.

Personal position. Not Jewish, not a Zionist, but strong supporter of Israel because it is the only democracy in area. It is a democracy by even the highest standards, and, in comparison to Arab neighbors, far outshines them. The most recent demonstration of the strength of Israel democracy was the enormous turnout of 10% of the population, within 10 days after the Sabra and Shatila camp massacres, to protest Israeli policy in Lebanon, and this was followed by the judicial commission which led to Sharon's resignation and other high level changes.

Because I am supporter of Israeli democracy, I feel the present situation is extremely dangerous, and that US policy at this juncture must be very carefully developed. Israel has been under attack for the full 35 years since its birth, having fought 5 or 6 wars, depending on how the situation with Egypt is counted. It has suffered thousands of terrorist attacks not only at home but in Europe and elsewhere. And its opponents have succeeded in gaining, with the support of the Communist bloc, the political support of most of the nations of the world. The fact that it has developed a laager philosophy is quite understandable - what is remarkable is that it has retained a very large measure of democracy. But its dependence on its military strength is only natural. What nation would act differently?

Since Prime Minister Begin is the symbol of that military strength, his popularity is high and his political strength is probably unassailable for the foreseeable future.

I worry because, unless the Palestinian question is resolved, there will be de facto if not de jure annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strips. And this will mean incorporation of some 1,300,000 Palestinians into the Israeli body politic. In a besieged nation, it is unthinkable that they can be given full political rights. Which means that, no matter how ardently Israelis try to maintain their democracy, it will be whittled away. And that is a dismal prospect.

The doves in Israel, even those who would support a Palestinian state, admit that they do not have the support of most Israelis, and further that they are frozen in place unless there are negotiating partners. The recent failure of talks between King Hussein and Arafat make it clear that the PLO will not agree to negotiations and that there exists at this time no process by which the West Bank can be negotiated.

There are those, including some within the Begin government, who believe that the ultimate solution will be some form of shared rule over these territories, with residents choosing whether they will be citizens of Jordan or Israel, and with those two powers working together, would exercise sovereignty. But that too is a long way off, the adherents of this approach confess, and will not be possible until all other approaches are exhausted, and until the Palestinians are themselves exhausted and come to recognize that their present stand against negotiation is self-defeating. Who knows what terrors will have to take place before that accommodation is reached?

My interviews with both the "dissidents" in Israel, with members of the government, and with former high intelligence officials have convinced me that the deadlock cannot be broken by any move from Israel. The actions of the PLO have, if anything, reinforced the Israeli conviction that they are still not willing to recognize Israel and to accept her existence in the region with secure and peaceful borders. The recent Palestinian National Council meeting, the failed talks between Hussein and Arafat, the assassination of Dr. Sartawi, all tend to reinforce the Israeli conviction that any gesture on their part would be seen as weakness by the PLO and would meet with no



positive response. After 35 years of incessant attack, what beleaguered nation would feel otherwise?

Further, I have come to the conviction that there is no possibility of a unilateral step from the PLO. Arafat's deliberate vagueness and ambiguity seems to me to be the deliberate actions of someone who is trying to juggle unbalanced forces and trying to maintain unity (regarded by the PLO as sacred) when there is no unity. It may be that Arafat has finally come down for political action, rather than terrorism, and that he seeks some means of opening negotiations with Israel. But it is quite clear that he is unwilling to sacrifice unity for that purpose, and that the most extreme elements in the PLO wield a veto power.

In addition, I have some very serious questions about whether the PLO can play a constructive political role in the midEast. In 1964 it was founded as an instrument of armed struggle, and it has recruited its membership on that basis. For years, its members have been engaged in ~~guerrilla~~ guerrilla warfare and terrorism, and in fomenting civil war. Twice in its history it has had administrative power within another country's sovereignty, and both times it has demonstrated its inability to function as a political power. In Jordan, in the 1970s, its actions so alarmed Hussein that he felt compelled to take military action against it and to expel it from Jordan. This despite the fact that it had been endorsed by the Arab countries, that its activities were presumably directed solely against Israel, and that he risked incurring the wrath of his Arab allies. But he felt compelled to move because of their destabilizing actions within his very fragile body politic.

In Lebanon, where the PLO went after leaving Jordan, their record is far worse. They literally took over sections of that fractured country, establishing hegemony so that Lebanese law and Lebanese authority no longer functioned in substantial parts of the nation. They fomented civil war~~xxxx~~ in 1975 and 1976, and sharply increased the hostility between Muslim and Christian. Their behavior in Southern Lebanon, where they ruled in the larger towns, was such that the inhabitants, whether Christian or Shi'a Muslim, were happy to welcome the Israeli incursion in the summer of 1982. They incited the bloody feuds between Christian and Moslem which led to the massacres in the 1975-76 civil war, to their retribution at Damour, and thus to the massacres at the Sabra and Shaila refugee camps.

In sum, their record does not give one any confidence that, even were they to come to the conclusion that they should accept Israel, that they could play a constructive role in the governance of any Palestinian entity.

The rejectionist Arab states actually prefer the present instability in the area. They serve to divert the materiel support from the Soviet Union, keeps their attention focussed on problems other than their own inability to solve them, enables them to ride the waves of Arab nationalism, and in general keeps the elites in power. XXXXXXXX

That leaves the so-called moderate Arab states. Here too the possibilities are fragile, since these oil-rich states have been the primary financial benefactors of the PLO. There is general agreement that this financial support is in essence blackmail, that their governments are so weak and insecure that the threat of PLO action within those countries presents a tangible challenge which they are unable and unwilling to face. So, they pay off.

Further, they appear to be terrified by what they call Khomeinism, the Muslim fanaticism which has gained such strength from the revolution in Iran and which threatens to spread over the entire Muslim area. Khomeinism is as rigidly anti-Israel as the rejectionist states, seeing it as a foreign, non-Muslim, body in their midst, a poison they cannot tolerate. But Khomeinism will grow so long as Israel continues to exist. Which means that only another war, perhaps a jihad, can resolve their fear.

It seems to be that these so-called moderate Arab states are in a terrible situation. Any course they take is bound to be not only difficult, but dangerous and perhaps bloody. But it also seems to me that the continuance of the status quo is more certain to unseat the present leadership and to lead to the victory of Khomeinism - witness Iran.

My judgment, therefore, is that the only possibility for any new initiative lies with the so-called moderate Arab states - and that is a very thin hope. It seems to me US policy should be directed toward that end, toward getting these countries to recognize that Israel is here to stay, and to helping them through the difficulties which must inevitably follow.

Such an initiative by the moderate Arab states, coupled with the cessation of subsidies to the PLO, would lead to a political upheaval in Israel, comparable to that which followed Sadat's historic announcement that he would go to Jerusalem, would accept Israel, and would negotiate. What now appears to be a frozen situation would turn quite flexible, and any Israeli government which did not respond positively would be short-lived. The possibilities for determining the status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be enhanced enormously and the area might finally become pacified.

Such a development would be a serious blow to the rejectionist states, to the Soviet Union, and to the PLO. But it would be an incomparable boon to the Palestinians, who would finally have their status resolved, to the Israelis, and to the moderate Arab states, if they were helped through the turmoil which would surely result. And it would be a boon to the US, which would finally see a policy bear fruit.

-30-


Omitted from the above, but needing to be inserted, is some detail of the present plight of the Palestinians, refugees for 35 years, unwelcome in most Arab states, and as a result a permanent source of difficulty in whatever region they reside.

Also, in discussing Israel's response to terrorist attacks, and its maintenance of democratic processes, might mention how Argentina responded, Rhodesia, South Africa, Poland, etc.

Walter

April 27, 1983

To: Readers of the Attached First Draft

From: Charles Bloomstein 

As you may know, I have had grave doubts as to the utility at this particular time of any report that attempts to deal constructively with the Arab/Israeli conflict. Nevertheless, I decided to have a go at it, to gain the reactions of other, more knowledgeable, people. The attached should be seen as a true first draft, literally off the top of my head.

I consider the sections describing the constraints on the various actors to be an accurate reflection of the situation, as seen by Bayard and myself. It is the conclusion, the attempt to be constructive, that seems to me to be outlandish and to have very little credibility. Yet, I could think of no other that would give the report bite.

I would appreciate two types of comment from readers. First, suggestions on how it can be improved, and second a judgement as to the desirability of publication, even if improved.

FIRST DRAFT (slightly edited)  
BAYARD RUSTIN STATEMENT ON AN INITIATIVE FOR THE MIDEAST

I am a supporter of Israel because it is a democratic state, however imperfect. I believe that it is entitled to live in peace with secure borders. While not a ~~academic specializing in the area~~ <sup>Scholar on Mid East Affairs</sup>, I have been there many times and have gained what I believe to be a fairly accurate understanding of the various forces at odds there - many not at all related to Israel.

I have slowly come to the conclusion that there is only one way out of this tangled mess, only one way to salvage even a modicum of peace in that turbulent region. One of the antagonists must act to cut what is truly a Gordian knot! As I ponder that prospect, I am struck by its improbability, by the enormous odds against that happening. Yet, I can see no other alternative.

My conviction is that only a unilateral initiative of major scope, such as Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977, can turn the tide. ~~And~~ When I look at the various actors directly concerned, I wonder where such an initiative can originate.

Can it come from Israel? Highly unlikely. After bearing 35 years of unceasing terrorism, war, and preparation for war, Israel has been inexorably pressured to become a garrison state. It sees itself beset by enemies on all sides, enemies bent on its destruction. For years, it has been offering to negotiate - with no takers. Even if Israel were to bring itself to offer concessions, to whom could it address itself?

Under these circumstances, my admiration for Israel's basic democracy is unbounded. What other nation do we know which has maintained the central structures and values of democracy through 35 years of war and terrorism? Israel's democracy is exemplary, even though correctly subject to situational criticism from time to time. The essence of democracy there remains intact, as witnessed by its fundamental tolerance of a dissident peace movement which could rally 10% of the population to an anti-government demonstration in Tel Aviv, ~~and~~ as witnessed further by the general acceptance of the report of the judicial commission which investigated Israel's possible complicity in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp massacres.

Prime Minister Begin, by virtue of his charisma and the perception of him as someone who will not yield on issues which involve Israel's very existence, is personally more popular than ever before. And while the peace movement does have broad appeal, it has no real program. It preaches negotiation, but cannot find an Arab

First Draft (slightly edited)  
Bayard Rustin Statement on An Initiative for the Mideast  
Page 2

counterpart with which to sit. <sup>Understandably</sup> It is therefore reduced to reacting to events, to protest. Reasonably, the majority of Israelis are fearful and simply cannot take the enormous risk involved in leaving the West Bank to their enemies. So, under Begin and for the foreseeable future, Israel is not capable of that initiative.

The PLO? Hardly. The February 1983 convention of the Palestinian National Congress did nothing to alter its 1964 covenant, which called for armed struggle against Israel until the end of its existence as a Jewish nation. It is clear that the extremists in the PLO have a veto over what the moderates, and there are undoubtedly many in the PLO, perhaps including Yasir Arafat himself, can do. The recent shuttling by Arafat among his factions and to and from Jordan, ending in rejection of a Jordanian role in negotiations, is further clear evidence of that veto power.

In addition, I have a personal question as to whether the PLO can be anything but a terrorist military organization. That is what it has been for the past 19 years, that is the basis on which it recruited its membership, and that is the basis on which it has been supported by its Arab allies. The kinds of people attracted to such an endeavor, the years of battle and frustration, seem to me to have developed within the PLO a character and attitude which makes it extremely unlikely that it can be converted into a political organization devoted to civic administration. The years in Jordan, leading to Black September in 1970, and the behavior of the PLO in Lebanon until its expulsion last summer, tend to support that conviction. It has given clear evidence that it accepts no law save its own, respects <sup>no one</sup> none but its adherents, and knows only how to carry on terror against civilians, not only in Israel but in Jordan and Lebanon as well. So, I do not see the PLO as capable of that sort of initiative. I also have grave doubts about whether, if a Palestinian entity eventually comes to pass, the present PLO would be a suitable instrument for its governance.

Jordan? Also highly unlikely. A weak and fragile monarchy dependent on other Arab states, it is in no position to undertake anything that does not have general Arab support. There are those who question whether Hussein is at all anxious to reassert sovereignty over the West Bank, which he sees primarily as a source of subversion and upheaval. It is also rumored that the Jordanian army wants no part of administering that region, for there are many on the West Bank who view Jordan as the villain of Black September, in which they lost friends and relatives. There are also many West Bankers who see Jordan as a hope, but at the very least the feelings there are mixed. Jordan cannot, perhaps even will not, undertake that initiative.

First Draft (slightly edited)  
Bayard Rustin Statement on An Initiative for the Mideast  
Page 3

Where does that leave us? The only actors left are the Arab states. And here we must separate the rejectionist states from the so-called moderates. Among the former are Iraq, Syria, Algeria, and Lybia (with non-Arab Iran violently anti-Israel and certainly a force). There is no possibility of any of these states playing any role looking toward peace. So, that leaves the so-called moderates.

Before we consider these actors, I believe certain things should be made clear. One, the failure of these Arab states to come to terms with Israel's existence does not arise from their perception of the needs of the Palestinian people. The refugees among them have been refugees for 35 years, and save ~~for~~ Jordan no Arab state has offered them citizenship. The Palestinian plight is a useful political and propaganda tool which the Arab states use to put pressure on the rest of the world in order to bring down Israel. Had there been any real sympathy for the Palestinians, offers of resettlement would have flooded in or, alternatively, negotiations with Israel would have begun long ago.

Nor is Israel's intensified settlement policy (a policy I oppose) any real barrier to negotiation. It too is used as a propaganda tool, as an excuse to avoid negotiation. There were no negotiations before Begin's acceleration of settlements on the West Bank, and there are none now. Oddly, as it becomes clear that the present Israel administration's policy toward the West Bank is for de facto if not de jure annexation, and that the settlements are steps toward that end, many Palestinians on the West Bank, where some 800,000 live, have concluded that unless there are negotiations, and soon, the West Bank will indeed be lost for the foreseeable future. So, perversely, Begin's settlement policy has increased both the urgency of, and Palestinian support for, negotiation.

The fact is that, since 1947, the Arab states, whether moderate or rejectionist, have been united on one central theme - opposition to the very existence of Israel. Whether that opposition would be directed against any non-Arab state, whether Jewish or not, is not relevant. The fact is that the Arab states have been convinced that they cannot and should not, tolerate that intrusion. They did not accept Israel when the UN voted to establish that state - and they do not accept it now. And that is what must change if there is to be any hope at all for peace in the Middle East.

~~And~~ That is why the moderate Arab states are the only remaining possible actors for the unilateral initiative needed. The act would be simply to state, openly and unequivocally, that they are willing to accept Israel's existence and willing to



- First Draft (slightly edited)  
Bayard Rustin Statement on An Initiative for the Mideast  
Page 4

recognize its borders, wherever they may be established by negotiation. ~~And~~ That act will take a lot of courage, more than any of these fragile regimes have shown in the past. So, I think it quite unlikely that such an event will come to pass, but alas I see it as the only alternative even remotely capable of bringing peace.

The arguments against such recognition, in addition to the basic opposition, are quite strong, and two of these are crucial. First is the fate of the PLO, which has been supported by enormous grants from the oil-rich (no longer quite so rich) Arab states. Most outside observers agree that at least one of the major reasons for such grants is fear of what would happen if they were cut off. The moderate Arab states are paying a kind of blackmail, to avoid subversion and terror directed against their autocratic but quite weak regimes. ~~But~~ It is clear that any Arab state which recognized Israel would simultaneously have to cut its ties with the PLO. The cutting off of such funds is possible only if accompanied by a willingness to face the consequences. ~~And~~ There would be consequences, very threatening ones. But I believe that comparable risks would derive from a prolonged continuation of the state of war against Israel. Since the PLO is at present in the weakest condition it has suffered in years, that step might be more feasible now than later. The cost of delay might be more terrible than taking action now, but even now it should be clear that rejecting the PLO would mean terrorism, subversion, and sabotage against the states taking such action. A fearful prospect.

There is another reason for Arab fear, perhaps even stronger. Khomeinism. Muslim fundamentalism is growing rapidly, and while not all of it is Shi'ite, the Arab states have given it the generic term of Khomeinism. On a recent tour of Arab countries, this was repeatedly stressed to me by government officials. They fear a violent eruption of Khomeinism if they were to recognize Israel. There is no question but that they are correct, that such recognition would inflame Muslim fundamentalists and would lead to turmoil. But again, what choice do they have? Khomeinism is growing in any case, and these moderate Arab states will have to face its demands sooner or later. And, if we extrapolate from present trends, the longer they delay the stronger will be Khomeinism.

So, by elimination, I come to the curious conclusion that the only hope of ending the war in the Mideast is by unilateral action by the Arab states, who started it in the first place.

First Draft (slightly edited)  
Bayard Rustin Statement on An Initiative for the Mideast  
Page 5

What should U.S. policy be? At the moment, we are in a confrontational mode with Israel, primarily over its slowness in leaving Lebanon and its accelerated settlement policy for the West Bank. But even dissident anti-Begin Israelis are convinced that Israel has no territorial ambitions in Lebanon and that the slowness of withdrawal is directly linked to legitimate security considerations. And, oddly, many of these are hopeful that, if Israel achieves satisfactory security arrangements for Lebanon, these could serve as a model for withdrawal from the West Bank. It seems to me that the US should continue its pressure on Israel to withdraw from Lebanon and to stop its settlements on the West Bank - but a lot depends on the style and tone of how we do it. The confrontational mode is not effective and strengthens support of what Israelis see as Begin's assertion of Israel sovereignty. I would advocate a much softer policy, with more carrots.

Lebanon's reluctance to normalize relations with Israel is admittedly the result of pressure from the Arab states, indeed the moderate Arab states. They are clearly a long way from agreeing to accept, much less recognize, the State of Israel. So, I believe that the real shift in U.S. policy must be in how we deal with the moderate Arab states. Here, I think we should unequivocally and openly urge them to break with their non-recognition policy, which has not been very effective for them and which has helped create the threats of the PLO and Khomeinism. And we should offer to help them cope with the social upheavals which would surely follow. For while they are right to be afraid, I reiterate that they have nothing to gain by delaying the inevitable. Turmoil will come whether they recognize Israel or not, so better let it come while their opponents are not at full strength and while they still have friends and allies who are willing to help. Better for the U.S. to help the moderate Arab states in controlling civic disorder than to continue to supply both sides with the munitions that they will ultimately and surely use against each other.

What would recognition by the Arab states mean for Israel? Also upheaval, a whole new ball game. They would react the way they did to Sadat - things thought irrevocably closed would suddenly open. The resultant nationwide discussion and debate would surely produce a new climate. The demand for peace would be overwhelming, and any government that wanted to continue to govern would have to be responsive. Negotiations could become possible, land returned, and the Palestinians could achieve some meaningful autonomy and perhaps, by degrees, full autonomy. I would think that the reaction within Israel would also be paralleled among West Bankers, and things would become possible there not now thinkable.

First Draft (slightly edited)  
Bayard Rustin Statement on An Initiative for the Mideast  
Page 6

What are the chances for such a move by the Arab states? Miniscule. But what is the alternative?

(I have some thoughts on the impact of the Soviet Union, but am not sure of the relevance. It would open up a whole discussion of the rejectionist states, which would mean another lengthy section, which I am not sure I ~~am~~ am competent to write).

Walter

Second Draft  
Initiative for the Middle East  
Bayard Rustin

There is by no means universal agreement that President Reagan's peace plan for the Middle East is the <sup>only</sup> way to go to achieve a cessation of hostilities in that troubled area. But the plan is here and our government is trying to pursue it. Even if not the perfect road to settlement, travelling down it a bit might give us some new perspectives and some new openings. My problem is not that our government is trying to implement the plan, but rather that its efforts are misdirected. I say this admitting that I am not an academic or diplomatic specialist on the Middle East. But I have travelled there many times, have spoken to a wide range of Israelis and Arabs, government leaders as well as just <sup>plain</sup> people, and I do believe that I have a fairly accurate understanding of the various forces at ~~work~~ odds ~~in~~ there - many not at all related to the Arab-Israeli conflict but nevertheless acting as barriers to its solution.

I am completely convinced that this is a true Gordian knot. Attempts to unravel it ~~will~~ ~~be~~ will be fruitless. It must simply be cut with one swift stroke, by one of the antagonists. And that swift stroke must be ~~in~~ in the form of a unilateral initiative of major scope, comparable to Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977. That bold act changed everything between Egypt and Israel. It will ~~not~~ take another such step. But when I look at the various actors directly concerned, I am struck by the improbability of that happening, by the enormous odds against it. I am convinced, that left to themselves, none of the actors will move from their frozen positions. And only one of the actors can possibly be brought to accept the desirability of such an initiative.

Can Israel offer such an initiative? Extremely unlikely, perhaps quite impossible. After 35 years of unceasing terrorism, war, and preparation for war, ~~after 35 years of unceasing terrorism, war, and preparation for war,~~ Israel feels in its bones, rightly or wrongly, that the entire Arab world, save Egypt, is out to destroy it. How could it be otherwise, when Israel continuously tried to negotiate and found not a single country willing to sit down with it until 1977. And then that country, Egypt, was excommunicated by the rest of the Arab world. Despite ambiguous hints to the contrary, the fact is that Israel must take the Palestinian National Covenant at face value. It has never been altered despite many opportunities. And it still calls for the physical destruction of the State of Israel. The irony is, to whom could Israel offer concessions, even if it wanted to?

Given these terrible pressures, Israel has somehow maintained its basic democracy. What other nation do we know which has fared as well, ~~in such~~ under literally seige conditions? ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Israel's dedication to democratic values is exemplary, even though it slips from time to time and must be subjected to justified criticism. But the essence of democracy there remains intact. Note the recent protest demonstration in Tel Aviv, called by dissidents to oppose the administration's policies, and attended by some 10% of the total population. An astounding feat. And note the general acceptance of the harsh criticism levelled at the military by the judicial commission which ~~investigated~~ Israel's possible complicity in the Sabra and Shaila <sup>+</sup>refugee camp massacres.

While the peace movement does have broad appeal, the bottom line is that it does not have a program. It preaches negotiation and compromise and returning the West Bank, but cannot find an Arab counterpart with which to work. It is therefore reduced to reacting to events, to protest. Reasonably, the majority of Israelis are fearful and simply cannot take the enormous risk involved if they were to become more vulnerable by returning land to their sworn enemies.

I oppose Israel's intensified settlement policy for the West Bank, but I am under no illusions that that policy is a barrier to negotiations. True, it is used as a propaganda tool and as an excuse by the Arabs to avoid negotiation. There were no negotiations before Begin's acceleration of settlements, and there are none now. Actually, as it becomes clearer that Begin's policy is aimed at de facto, if not de jure, permanent Israeli control of the West Bank, and that the settlements are steps toward that goal, many West Bankers have concluded that, unless there are negotiations, and soon, the West Bank will be lost to them for the foreseeable future. So, <sup>the</sup> settlement policy has increased the urgency for negotiations, and has also increased Palestinian support for such negotiations.

In this situation, Prime Minister Begin, by virtue of his charisma and the faith people have in him that he will not yield on issues that involve Israel's very existence, is personally more popular than ever before. There is a strong desire for peace among Israelis, but there is also strong conviction that the Arabs simply will not accept the existence of a Jewish state. Begin's hard line approach rules out concessions, and the people agree with him - at least in the present situation. So, I see no possibility of Israel undertaking the dramatic initiative required.



The PLO? Hardly. The February 1983 ~~convention~~ meeting of the Palestinian National Council did nothing to alter the covenant, which still calls <sup>only</sup> for armed struggle <sup>and for the destruction of</sup> as the only means of destroying the Israeli state. The extremists in the PLO have, despite their being in a minority, a veto power <sup>on</sup> such fundamental issues. Undoubtedly there are moderates in the PLO who want to recognize Israel - perhaps Yasir Arafat <sup>is</sup> among them, I do not know. But there is nothing they can do against that veto power. The recent shuttling by Arafat among his factions and to and from Amman, ending in rejection of a Jordanian role in negotiations, is ample evidence of that veto power. And Hussein's charge that Arafat reneged on an agreement, is, if true, evidence that Arafat is not the decisive voice.

In any case, I seriously doubt whether the PLO can be anything but a terrorist military organization. It was created by the Arab League for that express purpose, and for 19 years that is the basis on which it <sup>recruits, and</sup> still recruits, its membership and on which it still receives support from the Arab states. The kinds of people attracted to such an endeavor, the years of battle and frustration, the rigid rejection of any settlement short of a PLO victory, seems to me to have developed within the PLO an attitude, a character, which makes it extremely <sup>unlikely</sup> that it cannot be transformed into an instrument of civic administration. The years in Jordan led to Black September, 1970. The years in Lebanon led to civil war in 1975 and 1976, and finally expulsion. In both cases, seeking haven, the PLO behaved in such a manner that the local civilian population hated them and was happy to see them go. The PLO gave evidence that it could not carry on a civil administration, that it knew <sup>only</sup> how to exert violence and terror, that it accepted no law save its own, and that it could not deal decently with a civilian population under its control. I have grave doubts whether, if a Palestinian entity eventually came to pass, the PLO would be a suitable instrument for its governance. In any case, one cannot look at the present ~~to~~ time to <sup>the</sup> PLO for that dramatic initiative needed to break the stasis.

Jordan? Also ~~not~~ highly unlikely. A weak and fragile monarchy, Jordan made it clear that it would not, could not, act on its own. It had to have clearance from the PLO and from the Arab states.

There are those who question whether Hussein is at all anxious to reassert sovereignty over the West Bank. The fractious Palestinians would only be a source of subversion, unrest and upheaval. It is also rumored that the Jordanian Army would just as soon not have that responsibility. And there are many West Bankers who view Jordan as the villain of Black September, in which they lost friends and relatives. While others

there see Jordan as the most probable hope for ending the Israeli administration, Jordan would, at the least, receive a mixed reception if it took over. Under these circumstances, Jordan cannot, perhaps even will not, undertake that initiative.

Where does that leave us? The only actors left among those directly involved are the Arab states. And here we must separate the rejectionists from the so-called moderates (I adopt for this piece the convention that the pro-Western or anti-Soviet Arab states are moderate, although I find very little evidence of that in their attitude towards the MidEast conflict)) There is no prospect at all that the rejectionists states, which include Iraq, Syria, Lybia and others (with non-Arab Iran certainly also a force), would undertake such an initiative. It is precisely what they oppose. Which leaves us with the moderates, meaning essentially Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Since I have already discussed Jordan, I must now deal with Saudi Arabia.

But before we go into this, I would like to discuss the problem of the Palestinian refugees. It is clear, to me at least, that the failure of the Arab states to come to terms with Israel's existence does not arise from empathy with the Palestinian people. These refugees have been in that unhappy status for 35 years, and save for Jordan, no Arab state has offered them citizenship and not one has acted to absorb them into their local populations. Indeed, I am convinced that the Arab states have prolonged the refugee status of the Palestinians simply to have a propaganda tool to use against Israel. Had they had any real desire to help the Palestinians, they would have absorbed them long ago, or come to terms with Israel ~~which is now the case~~ so that permanent arrangements could have been made for them.

And here we come to the crux of the matter. The fact is that all the Arab States (with the recent exception of Egypt) have been united on one central theme - opposition to the very existence of Israel, which they regard as a foreign body in what should be a purely Arab area. Someone recently identified some 30-odd <sup>conflicts</sup> ~~was~~ among Arab states, since 1947, <sup>involving almost</sup> ~~in which~~ every Arab state <sup>and having correlation to</sup> ~~has been involved, but not~~ Israel. So, this may be the only thing, besides religion, on which they are united (and whether religion is a unifying force <sup>is</sup> also ~~is~~ <sup>debatable</sup>). And this is what must change, if there is to be any <sup>end to</sup> ~~peace~~ the Arab/Israeli conflict. The Arab states did not accept the UN decision to establish Israel, not then and not now. The war began because of that non-acceptance, and will not end until that changes. Any agreement that results in all foreign troops leaving Lebanon is devoutly to be desired, but it will not <sup>affect</sup> that basic situation. ~~It will not affect that basic situation.~~

So, if Arab recognition of Israel is the basic condition for there to be any peace in that area, and if the rejectionist Arab states ~~cannot~~ do not seek that goal, the only possible source for that initiative is Saudi Arabia. It is highly unlikely that Saudi Arabia can bring itself to recognize Israel within secure borders agreed upon by negotiation. Besides its intrinsic opposition to Israel, Saudi Arabia, with its fragile regime, has two additional fears which <sup>make</sup> such recognition difficult.

First is fear of PLO terrorism, subversion, and sabotage. Recognition of Israel means rejection of the PLO as an instrument, and that means cutting off the massive infusions of funds which Saudi Arabia provides. Most observers agree that these funds are a payoff to the PLO in order to avoid terrorist activities. Cutting off that support may very well cause the PLO to direct its wrath against Saudi Arabia, which would then become a target <sup>in addition to</sup> ~~as well as~~ Israel. But the PLO is right now weaker than it has been in many years, and taking that step now might cost less than it would later, when the PLO finishes regrouping. Israel has borne PLO terrorism for some 35 years, and while it has suffered greatly from such acts, the fact is that the suffering has been psychological more than physical, that the total ~~of~~ impact of PLO terrorism has been peripheral and ineffective in terms of what it has attempted to achieve. Saudi Arabia would have to be willing to assume a comparable risk.

There is another reason for Arab fear, perhaps even stronger than PLO retribution. That is Khomeinism. Muslim fundamentalism is growing rapidly, and while not all of it is Shi'ite, the term Khomeinism is used to ~~as~~ describe it. But, as in the case of the PLO, what choice do they really have? Certainly, there would be a violent eruption from fundamentalist Muslims if Saudi Arabia were to make peace with Israel. But that fundamentalism will be directed against the existing regimes in any case, and its challenge must be faced sooner or later. If we extrapolate from present trends, the longer the delay the stronger will be Khomeinism. So, as in the case of the PLO, a confrontation now might be less costly in the long run. At present, Saudi Arabian leadership seems to be passively awaiting the onslaught, perhaps hoping it will be delayed until after their time. They seem to be taking no steps designed to halt the spread. Surely, there are some causes outside religion which foster Khomeinism, and just as surely this leadership ought to be investigating that aspect and thinking of actions it could undertake to hold back the tide.

The real question that we here must deal with is what should U.S. policy be? At the moment, we are in a confrontation mode with Israel, primarily over its slowness in leaving Lebanon and ~~xxx~~ the rapidity with which it is planting settlements on the West Bank. But even ardently anti-Begin Israelis are convinced that Israel has no territorial ambitions in Lebanon and that the slowness of withdrawal is linked to legitimate security considerations. Many of those who wish to see Israel withdraw from the West Bank are hopeful that Lebanon can provide a model for later Israeli withdrawal from that area. I have no problem with continued U.S. pressure on Israel on these two matters. But it seems to me to be a serious error to conduct that pressure in a confrontational mode. For one thing, that mode is counter-productive, since it hardens Israel's ~~conviction~~ <sup>conviction</sup> ~~conviction~~ that it must act in what it perceives as its own vital interest, and ~~xxx~~ that it cannot accept a diktat from outside, not from even its firmest friend, the U.S. For another, and even more important, it makes visible U.S. policy, but directed at the wrong target.

We ought to be pressing the Arab states to permit Lebanon to conclude arrangements with Israel - for it is clear that Lebanon can act only when it has the approval of the Arab states, and primarily that of Saudi Arabia. We must openly, persistently, and unequivocally pressure the Arab states to abandon their non-recognition policy, particularly Saudi Arabia. It has not gained the goals sought, it has led them to create the PLO, and it fosters Khomeinism. We ought to advise them that it is better for them to face the turmoil now, while ~~they are~~ those they fear are weaker than they will be in the future, and we ought to let them know that we are willing to help them to reduce such civic disorder. The munitions we now sell to Saudi Arabia are useless for internal upheaval control, as proven in Iran. Far better that their funds be spent on social benefits which might strengthen their fragile regimes and might serve as a counter to PLO and Khomeinist violence.

What would Arab recognition of Israel mean? In Israel, it would also mean upheaval, a new ball game. The Israelis would, I believe, react as they did to Sadat - things thought closed would be suddenly open. There would be nationwide debate and discussion, which would lead to a new climate in which the demand for peace would be overwhelming. Any government which wanted to continue to govern would have to be responsive. Land could be surrendered, negotiations would become possible, and ~~xxxx~~ meaningful Palestinian autonomy could be accepted.

I think that that reaction would be paralleled among West Bankers. They would see the possibility of ending Israeli domination of their land and would, I believe, be willing to work politically toward that end. Palestinian refugees elsewhere would have to abandon their hope, never very practical, of returning. They too would have to adopt political avenues.

Since the Soviet Union has always recommended the recognition of Israel, it would have to applaud the move, at least <sup>in public</sup> ~~privately~~. It would also find it <sup>more</sup> difficult to continue to sell arms to rejectionist terrorist groups, <sup>It would also have problems with</sup> client states among the rejectionists. It would certainly be unhappy about having been excluded from the international conference (which would no longer be needed) that it counted upon to give it access to ~~its~~ increased influence in the Middle East.

What are the chances for such a move by the Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia? Miniscule, if not less. But what point is there in our following a policy which <sup>does</sup> ~~not~~ deal with the central problem, which is not Israeli intransigence (irritating as that may be) but Arab refusal to recognize Israel. It was that refusal which led to the Arab attack on Israel in 1948, and it is that continued refusal of recognition which keeps the area inflamed. There can be <sup>peaceful</sup> ~~no~~ resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict ~~unless~~ without that recognition, and that is where <sup>the weight of</sup> U.S. policy ought to be directed. Slender as the hopes are, what is the alternative?



Sent to: Kahn  
Seyman  
Baum  
Freedman  
Bromberg  
Gershman  
Muravchik  
J. Small  
Slaiman  
Jevine

## A. Philip Randolph Institute

260 Park Avenue South / New York, N.Y. 10010 / (212) 533-8000

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

TO: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

<input type="checkbox"/> As you requested	<input type="checkbox"/> Please see me about this
<input type="checkbox"/> For your approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Please read and return
<input type="checkbox"/> For your file	<input type="checkbox"/> Returned as requested
<input type="checkbox"/> For your information	<input type="checkbox"/> Your comments, please
<input type="checkbox"/> Please handle	

Comments:

### R E M I N D E R

Recently I sent you a draft of a piece on the Middle East which Charlie Bloomstein and I collaborated on together.

Please let me know your reactions to it as soon as conveniently possible, as I would like to start on a final version next week. Your response to the two items raised in the cover memo (copy enclosed) is solicited in particular... and greatly appreciated.



also: given by hand to:

Herb Levine  
Histadrut

Donny Sleiman  
AFL-CIO

BAYARD RUSTIN  
260 PARK AVENUE SOUTH  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10010

May 13, 1983

To:

From: Bayard Rustin

Re: Enclosed Draft on the Middle East

-----

Enclosed please find a piece on the Middle East, which Charles Bloomstein and I drafted recently.

My three trips to that area since last summer - two of which Charlie accompanied me on - convince me that the analysis presented herein is correct. However, before a final version is prepared, I would appreciate learning

1. Your views on whether it is politically wise to publish it now; and

2. Your recommendations for improving it.

Please feel free to consult with any colleagues you feel would be helpful. And, thanks so much for your time and attention. I look forward to hearing from you.

Ms. Joan Suall  
National Council of Jewish Women  
15 East 26th St.  
New York, N.Y. 10010

4/23 left word -

Mr. Emanuel Muravchik  
Executive Director  
Jewish Labor Committee  
25 East 78th Street  
New York, NY 10021

5/23 -  
just returned from  
trip - hasn't seen it yet  
Will try to call today.

Mr. Carl Gershman  
United States Mission to the U.N.  
799 U.N. Plaza  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Dr. William Korey  
Director, Int'l. Policy Research  
B'nai B'rith International  
823 U.N. Plaza  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Mr. Charney Bromberg  
Assistant Director  
N.J.C.R.A.C.  
~~55 West 42nd Street~~  
New York, N.Y.

443 PAS So.  
NYC 10016

~~443-10036~~



Mr. Tom Kahn  
Assistant to the President  
AFL-CIO  
815 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

*Called 5/23 for  
reaction.  
...  
...  
... phone in comment*

Mr. Henry Seigman  
Executive Director  
American Jewish Congress  
15 East 84th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10028

(s) 185

Mr. Phil Baum  
American Jewish Congress  
15 East 84th Street  
New York, NY 10028

(s) 185

Ms. Rita Freedman  
Executive Director  
Social Democrats USA  
275 7th Avenue, 25th Fl.  
New York, NY 10001

(s) 185

Mr. Irwin Suall  
Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith  
823 United Nations Plaza  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Draft

Untitled Report on the MidEast  
by Bayard Rustin

The recently concluded agreement between Lebanon and Israel for the withdrawal of Israeli troops is certainly an extremely important step forward, and the U.S. negotiators, Secretary of State Schultz, Philip Habib, and Morris Draper, are to be highly commended for their excellent work. At the time of this writing, the Lebanese Parliament has not yet approved the arrangements, and certainly there is grave doubt about whether the Syrians will also agree to withdraw, a necessary step if the agreement is to be implemented. So, much still hangs in the balance, despite this important step forward.

What I would like to stress here, however, is that the agreement between Israel and Lebanon is peripheral to the main issue in the MidEast and progress there does not necessarily mean that peace is imminent. Many Arabs have held that the ability to arrange an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon was to be looked upon as a signal of Israeli intentions, and that the Lebanese arrangement was a necessary precondition to any real discussions leading to an end of the Arab/Israeli war. My own feeling is that that was a ploy to delay basic negotiations. We shall see.

Presumably, President Reagan's peace plan is still on the table. Whether or not it is the only way to go is debatable. However, there being no alternate plan, it seems to me that the Reagan plan should be pressed. Even if not the final road to a settlement, travelling down it a bit might give us some new perspectives and some new openings. So, I have no problem with our government continuing to pressure the participants to implement the process. But I do feel quite strongly that we are not pressuring the right parties - that our aim is misdirected.

I am convinced that the MidEast situation presents us with a true Gordian knot. Intertwined with many issues not directly connected with Israel, the complexities defy untangling and attempts to unravel it bit by bit will be fruitless. It must be cut with one simple, swift, well-aimed stroke. And that can be accomplished only by one of the antagonists. What is needed now is a unilateral initiative of major scope, comparable to Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977. That changed the entire context of Egyptian-Israeli relations and made possible what had not been even remotely considered before. What is needed now is another such stroke.

Rustin - 2

But when I look at the various actors directly concerned, I am struck by the improbability of that happening, by the enormous odds against it. Left to themselves, none of the actors will, or can, move from their frozen positions. But possibly one of the actors can be pressured to take such an initiative. And that is where I believe that U.S. policy should be directed - to facilitate and encourage a bold new initiative that will change the entire context within which the MidEast is now mired.

Can Israel be brought to offer such an initiative? I find that extremely unlikely, regardless of pressure. After 35 searing years of unremitting terrorism, war, and preparation for war, Israel feels in its bones, whether rightly or wrongly, that the entire Arab world, save Egypt, is out to destroy it. How could they feel otherwise, when they had continuously tried to negotiate peace and could find not a single Arab country willing to deal with it, until 1977? And when that country, Egypt, appeared, it was excommunicated by the rest of the Arab world. Despite ambiguous hints that it no longer means what it says, Israel simply must take the Palestinian "ational Covenant at face value. It has never been altered since the Rabat conference in 1974, not even at the Fez meetings in 1982. It still calls for the destruction of the State of Israel, to be achieved solely through armed struggle. So, to whom can Israel offer an initiative, even if it wished to?

Despite these terrible pressures, Israel has somehow maintained its basic democracy and morality. What other nation do we know that has fared as well in these areas under literally seige conditions? Take a look at those countries dealing with insurgency and terrorism and see if you can identify any which has done as well. So, I believe Israel's dedication to democracy is exemplary, even though I can find reason from time to time to be critical of its behavior in specific situations. But the essence of democracy remains substantially intact. Note the recent protest demonstration in Tel Aviv, called by those opposed to the government's policies in Lebanon and attended by some 10% of the population. Surely that demonstration was instrumental in forcing the government to shift and to appoint a judicial commission to examine its possible complicity in the Sabra and Shatila refugees camp massacres. And the report of that judicial commission was highly critical <sup>of</sup> and very senior army and government officials, charging them with serious errors of omission and lapses of exercise of responsibility - a finding that was general accepted as sound by the Israelis, even if reluctantly accepted by the government. Despite the 35 years of war and the threat of war, Israeli citizens speak freely, the press is free, and harsh attacks and criticism of government policies are frequent, indeed increasing. There has been no attempt to suppress that criticism, by the government or by any political movement.

Rustin - 3

Israel has a flourishing peace movement, with extremely broad appeal. It educates for compromise and negotiation, and for surrendering the West Bank to some competent Palestinian authority. Sadly, it has no counterparts in the Arab world, nor can it even find Arabs willing to negotiate. It is therefore reduced to reacting to events, to protest and demonstrations. Reasonably, the vast majority of Israelis simply cannot take the enormous risk involved if they were to become more vulnerable by returning land to their sworn enemies. But were that to change, were there to be a peace thrust by the Arabs, the Israeli peace movement would not only be able to present a viable program, it would literally sweep the country.

I opposed Israeli settlements on the West Bank when begun by the Labor governments, and I oppose the present intensified settlement policy even more. But I am under no illusions that that policy is the bar to negotiations. The Arabs do use it as a propaganda tool and as an excuse, but there were no negotiations before there were any settlements, before Begin's accelerated settlement program - and there are none now. Actually, as more and more people become convinced that the present policy is aimed at de facto, if not de jure, permanent Israeli control of the West Bank, and that the settlements are steps toward that goal, many Palestinians on the West Bank have concluded that unless there are negotiations soon the West Bank will be lost to them for the foreseeable future. So, we are now seeing increased pressure from West Bank Palestinians for peace and for negotiations.

In this situation, Prime Minister Begin, by virtue of his charisma and the conviction he conveys that he will not yield on issues that involve Israel's very existence, is personally more popular than ever before. While there is a strong desire for peace among Israelis, there is also strong feeling that the Arabs will simply not accept the existence of a Jewish state. As a result, the Israeli people agree with Begin's hard line approach, at least in the present situation. Given these facts, I see no possibility of, indeed no reason for, Israel undertaking the dramatic initiative required. Any government which acted to weaken Israel's security would be quickly overthrown.

Can the PLO undertake such an initiative? Even less likely than Israel. The February 1983 meeting of the Palestinian National Council did nothing to alter the covenant, which calls only for armed struggle to destroy the Israeli state. While the extremists in the PLO may be a minority, they obviously have a veto power on

Rustin 4

such fundamental issues. There may be moderates in the PLO who are willing to accept Israel - perhaps Yasir Arafat is among them (if so, he has carefully avoided making that clear). But there is nothing they can do against that veto power. The recent shuttling by Arafat among his factions and to and from Amman, ending in rejection of a Jordanian role in negotiations, is ample evidence of that veto power. And Hussein's charge that Arafat reneged on an agreement, is evidence, if true, that Arafat is not the decisive voice.

In any case, I seriously doubt that the PLO can be anything but a terrorist military organization. It was created by the Arab League for that purpose, and for 19 years that is the basis on which it recruited and still recruits its membership. And that is the basis on which it receives support from the Arab states. The kinds of people attracted to such an endeavor, the years of battle and frustration, the rigid rejection of any settlement short of a PLO victory, seems to me to have developed within the PLO an attitude, a character, which makes it extremely unlikely that it can be transformed into an instrument of negotiation or of civic administration. The years of PLO residence in Jordan led to Black September in 1970. The years of PLO domination in southern Lebanon led to civil war in 1975 and 1976, to "amour, and finally to expulsion. In both cases, while claiming to seek haven, the PLO behaved in such a manner that the local civilian population was overjoyed to see them go. The PLO ruled in Lebanon by violence, theft, and terror, and could not deal humanely and decently with a civilian population under its control. I have grave doubts whether, if a Palestinian entity eventually comes to pass, the PLO would be a suitable instrument for its governance. In any case, it is clear that, at the present time, one cannot look to the PLO for that dramatic initiative needed.

Jordan? Also highly unlikely. A weak and fragile monarchy, Jordan has made it clear that it would not, indeed could not, act on its own. It had to have clearance from the PLO. On a recent trip ~~with~~ with a delegation of the Socialist International, headed by Mario Soares of Portugal, we met with Crown Prince , King Hussein's brother. And he helped us to understand that the PLO has a veto over what Jordan does, that the left wing of the PLO has a veto over what the PLO does, and that in effect, the left wing of the PLO has a veto over what the Arab states do with respect to Israel.



There is also some question as to whether King Hussein is at all anxious to reassert sovereignty over the West Bank - a sovereignty achieved by war in 1948 and never recognized by the Arab states. The fractious Palestinians would be only a source of subversion, unrest, and upheaval. Does the Jordanian Army really want that responsibility? Particularly when there are many Palestinians on the West Bank who regard Jordan as the villain of Black September, in which they lost friends and relatives. There are <sup>also</sup> many West Bankers, and I spoke with some, who view Jordan as their most likely hope for ending the Israeli occupation. So, at best, Jordan can expect only a mixed reception. All these circumstances combine to make Jordan a very unlikely candidate to undertake that initiative.

Where does that leave us? The only remaining direct actors are the Arab states. And here we must separate the rejectionists from the so-called moderates (I adopt for this piece the convention that the pro-Western or anti-Soviet Arab states are moderate, although I find very little evidence of that in their social, economic, or governmental structures or in their attitude toward Israel). There is no prospect at all that the rejectionists, which include Iraq, Syria, Lybia, and others (with non-Arab Iran certainly also a force), would undertake such an initiative. It is precisely what they are adamant in opposing. Which leaves us with the moderates, meaning essentially Jordan and Saudi Arabia. I have already discussed Jordan, so now must deal with Saudi Arabia.

But before I go into that, I would like to take up the problem of the Palestinian refugees. It is clear, to me at least, that the failure of the Arab states to accept Israel's existence does not arise from outrage over the plight of the Palestinian refugees, a status they have suffered for some 35 years. Save for Jordan, no Arab state~~s~~ has offered them citizenship nor has acted to absorb them into the local population. Indeed, I am convinced that the Arab states have deliberately prolonged the refugee status of those unhappy Palestinians in order to have a propaganda tool to use against Israel. Had they had any real desire to ease their plight, they would have absorbed them long ago, or come to terms with Israel so that permanent arrangements could have been made for their resettlement.

And here we come to the crux of the matter. The fact is that the Arab states are united only on non-recognition of Israel. Egypt broke that unity, and was punished for it. They look upon Israel as an intolerable intruder into what should be an Arab sea. Since some 30-odd conflicts between Arab states have been identified since World War II, involving practically every Arab state~~s~~ and not Israel in any way, this may be the only thing they have been united on. These conflicts, to name a

Rustin - 6

few, include Iran/Iraq, Syria/Jordan, Yemen/South Yemen, Egypt/Lybia, and Lybia/Chad. Even Muslimism seems not, with the rise of Khomeinism, to be a unifying force.

It is that unified opposition to Israel which must be broken, if there is to be any end to the Arab/Israeli conflict. The Arab states did not accept the UN decision to establish the State of Israel, not then and not now. The wars began because of that refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Israel, and they will not end until that changes. That is the essence of the dramatic initiative needed, and the only possible source for it is Saudi Arabia!

Obviously, Saudi Arabia will not undertake that step unless and until it sees no other alternative. I believe that, in the long run, its stability depends on it making that move. Just as my respect and admiration for Israel has led me on many occasions to be critical of Israeli actions which I believed were not in Israel's interests in the long run, so I am now recommending what may be a difficult course for Saudi Arabia to pursue, and my urging springs from my view of what is ultimately in its own interest.

Besides its intrinsic opposition to Israel's existence, Saudi Arabia, with its fragile regime, has two additional fears which make recognition of Israel difficult. First is fear of PLO terrorism, subversion, and sabotage. Concomitant with recognition of Israel must be rejection of the PLO as the Arab instrument, and cessation of financial and other support. Most observers agree that the massive funds supplied to the PLO by Saudi Arabia are a payoff to avoid terrorist activities directed against the House of Saud. The PLO ~~xxx~~<sup>would</sup> not take rejection lightly, and there is every likelihood that Saudi Arabia would be added to Israel as an object of PLO wrath. But at the moment the PLO is weaker than it has been in years, and taking that step now may very well be less costly than later, when the PLO would be rebuilt with Saudi and Soviet help. Israel has suffered from PLO terrorism for years, but has survived and has found that the terror and sabotage, while painful and psychologically almost unbearable, are no real challenges to its stability. Terrorism is peripheral, a painful testing but not a real threat to the established order. Saudi Arabia would have to be willing to assume a comparable risk.

There is another reason for Arab fear, perhaps even stronger than PLO vengeance. That is Khomeinism. Muslim fundamentalism is growing rapidly, and while not all of it is Shi'ite, the term Khomeinism is used to describe it. While I was in

Rustin - 7

Tunisia with the Socialist International delegation, we were taken by the Prime Minister to a place where we could overlook a large courtyard. Within that area some 3,000 students, from law, medicine, engineering and other faculties of the university, were caught up in the throes of Muslim fundamentalism, flogging themselves and working themselves up to a frenzy of religious fervor. That, the Prime Minister told us, was what he feared if Tunisia were to recognize Israel. The fact that the elites of the Arab countries are being engulfed by religious fervor is what frightens their leaders. And they should be frightened, for it is a real problem. But they are not coping with it now, and it is growing. The longer the delay in meeting the challenge, the stronger will be Khomeinism. And no Muslim country is immune, particularly not Saudi Arabia, which seems to be passively awaiting the onslaught.

Perhaps they are waiting in the hope that the deluge will come after them. It may, but it will be visited on their heirs in that case. If we extrapolate from present trends, the longer the delay the stronger will be Khomeinism. So, as in the case of the PLO, a confrontation now may be less costly in the long run. Surely, there must be some causes outside religion which foster such fundamentalism. And surely these ought to be investigated and actions taken to correct such stimuli. For the Saudi's own sake, they ought to be encouraged to take whatever steps are possible now to hold back that tide, which they fear will someday engulf them and which indeed will if they remain passive. *That is their responsibility.*

Here we must deal primarily with what U.S. policy should be. At the moment, the U.S. is in a confrontation mode with Israel, primarily over its slowness in leaving Lebanon (a problem which may have been solved) and over the rapidity with which it is planting settlements on the West Bank. I have no problem with continued U.S. pressure on Israel on these issues. But it seems to me to be a serious error to conduct that pressure in a hostile mode. It is bound to be counterproductive, as the confrontational mode has been with other allies when used in the past. It will rally Israelis behind those leaders they see protecting Israeli security and sovereignty, and will harden the Israeli conviction that it must itself decide what is in its own best interest and that it cannot accept a diktat, not even from its best friend, the United States. For another, and even more important reason, it is wrong because it makes visible U.S. policy, but directed against the wrong target. It misleads the Arabs and diverts them from their own responsibilities in the conflict. Our emphasis should be on the need for the Arab states to understand that only they can end the conflict, and that they must come to the conclusion that the only way to do that is by a simple, unequivocal declaration that they are willing to recognize

Israel and to live with it. We must make clear that the Arab non-recognition policy has not only brought constant war and unrest throughout the region, it has not achieved its goals and cannot achieve its goals. It has led to the PLO and it fosters Khomeinism.

We ought to be advising Saudi Arabia that it would do better to face the threats of the PLO and Khomeinism now, while these forces are weaker than they will be in the future, and we ought to let them know that we would be willing to help them reduce such civic disorder. The munitions we now sell to Saudi Arabia are useless to them for the real problems they face, as proven in Iran. Far better that their funds be spent on social benefits which might strengthen their fragile regimes and might serve as a counter to PLO and Khomeinist violence.

What would Arab recognition of Israel, within secure and recognized borders, mean? It would mean upheaval in Israel - a whole new ball game. Just as they reacted to Sadat's initiative in 1977, I believe the Israelis would erupt with ebullience to such an Arab initiative. There would be nationwide debate and discussion, the peace strength would gain enormously, and things thought rigidly closed would suddenly be seen as open and flexible. There would be a new climate in which many matters previously deemed non-negotiable would suddenly be open to adjustment. Any government which wanted to continue to govern would have to be responsive to that new mood. Land could be surrendered, negotiations possible, and true Palestinian autonomy could be accepted.

I believe there would be a comparable reaction among Palestinian West Bankers. Once the possibility of ending Israeli occupation became visible and real, I believe they would be willing to work politically toward that goal. Arrangements would become possible for the Palestinian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. A number of these could return to the West Bank, the others could be resettled. The MidEast nightmare could end.

Since the Soviet Union has, from 1947 on, always supported the recognition of the State of Israel, they would have to applaud the move, at least in public. They would find it difficult to justify selling arms to terrorist groups which rejected the settlement - there will surely be some, and they would have some problems among their rejectionist client states. The Soviet Union would certainly be unhappy about having been excluded from the international conference which it had depended upon to end the conflict, and in which they <sup>had</sup> counted on playing an important role, leading to

Rustin - 9

the extension of their influence in the MidEast. On the whole, they might be unhappy about the way the settlement was achieved, with heightened<sup>en</sup> U.S. prestige, ~~but~~ and no gains for them.

A settlement in the MidEast would have a profound effect on the United Nations as a institution. Ever since the PLO and the various liberation movements began to use the UN as a channel with which to chastise Israel, that institution has fallen into disarray. It has been increasingly bypassed on matters of moment, and has lost credibility as a viable international institution. Once the MidEast conflict is removed from its agenda, the major source of friction will be gone and there would be a strong possibility that the UN could regain its prestige and could begin to function as it was once hoped it would.

What are the chances for a settlement in the MidEast sparked by such a dramatic initiative from Saudi Arabia? Miniscule, if not less. But what has the U.S. to gain from following a policy which does not deal with the central problem, indeed which misdirects our energy and resources? Israeli so-called intransigence, irritating as it may be, is not the cause of the conflict. The central, original, and abiding cause is Arab refusal to recognize Israel. It was that refusal which led to the Arab attack on Israel in 1948, and it is that continued refusal which keeps the area inflamed and at war or the threat of war. There can be no peaceful resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict without that recognition. That is where U.S. policy ought to be directed. The hopes that such a policy would be successful are indeed slender. But what is the alternative?

Comments are

from Rita Freedman

(as per phone conversation  
of 6/2/83)

H-S.

May 10, 1983

To: Readers of the Rustin Report on Israel

From: Charles Bloomstein

-----

Attached is what I hope is the penultimate draft of this report.

It was composed rather hastily and as a result has several awkward passages. I would appreciate any suggestions you might give me with respect to language and construction, as well as any substantive matters.

Also, the piece is as yet untitled. Any ideas?

Draft

Untitled Report on the MidEast  
by Bayard Rustin

The recently concluded agreement between Lebanon and Israel for the withdrawal of Israeli troops is certainly an extremely important step forward, and the U.S. negotiators, Secretary of State Schultz, Philip Habib, and Morris Draper, are to be highly commended for their excellent work. At the time of this writing, the Lebanese Parliament has not yet approved the arrangements, and certainly there is grave doubt about whether the Syrians will also agree to withdraw, a necessary step if the agreement is to be implemented. So, much still hangs in the balance, despite this important step forward.

What I would like to stress here, however, is that the agreement between Israel and Lebanon is peripheral to the main issue in the MidEast and progress there does not necessarily mean that peace is imminent. Many Arabs have held that the ability to arrange an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon was to be looked upon as a signal of Israeli intentions, and that the Lebanese arrangement was a necessary precondition to any real discussions leading to an end of the Arab/Israeli war. My own feeling is that that was a ploy to delay basic negotiations. We shall see. *we should call their bluff.*

Presumably, President Reagan's peace plan is still on the table. Whether or not it is the only way to go is debatable. However, there being no alternate plan, it seems to me that the Reagan plan should be pressed. Even if not the final road to a settlement, travelling down it a bit might give us some new perspectives and some new openings. So, I have no problem with our government continuing to pressure the participants to implement the process. But I do feel quite strongly that we are not pressuring the right parties - that our aim is misdirected.

I am convinced that the MidEast situation presents us with a true Gordian knot. Intertwined with many issues not directly connected with Israel, the complexities defy untangling and attempts to unravel it bit by bit will be fruitless. It must be cut with one simple, swift, well-aimed stroke. And that can be accomplished only by one of the antagonists. What is needed now is a unilateral initiative of major scope, comparable to Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977. That changed the entire context of Egyptian-Israeli relations and made possible what had not been even remotely considered before. What is needed now is another such stroke.



PLO Covenant Rustin - 2

But when I look at the various actors directly concerned, I am struck by the improbability of that happening, by the enormous odds against it. Left to themselves, none of the actors will, or can, move from their frozen positions. But possibly one of the actors can be pressured to take such an initiative. And that is where I believe that U.S. policy should be directed - to facilitate and encourage a bold new initiative that will change the entire context within which the MidEast is now mired.

Can Israel be brought to offer such an initiative? I find that extremely unlikely, regardless of pressure. After 35 searing years of unremitting terrorism, war, and preparation for war, Israel feels in its bones, whether rightly or wrongly, that the entire Arab world, save Egypt, is out to destroy it. How could they feel otherwise, when they had continuously tried to negotiate peace and could find not a single Arab country willing to deal with it, until 1977? And when that country, Egypt, appeared, it was excommunicated by the rest of the Arab world. Despite ambiguous hints that it no longer means what it says, Israel simply must take the Palestinian National Covenant at face value. It has never been altered since the Rabat conference in 1974, not even at the Fez meetings in 1982. It still calls for the destruction of the State of Israel, to be achieved solely through armed struggle. So, to whom can Israel offer an initiative, even if it wished to?

Despite these terrible pressures, Israel has somehow maintained its basic democracy and morality. What other nation do we know that has fared as well in these areas under literally seige conditions? Take a look at those countries dealing with insurgency and terrorism and see if you can identify any which has done as well. So, I believe Israel's dedication to democracy is exemplary, even though I can find reason from time to time to be critical of its behavior in specific situations. But the essence of democracy remains substantially intact. Note the recent protest demonstration in Tel Aviv, called by those opposed to the government's policies in Lebanon and attended by some 10% of the population. Surely that demonstration was instrumental in forcing the government to shift and to appoint a judicial commission to examine its possible complicity in the Sabra and Shatila refugees camp massacres. And the report of that judicial commission was highly critical of very senior army and government officials, charging them with serious errors of omission and lapses of exercise of responsibility - a finding that was general accepted as sound by the Israelis, even if reluctantly accepted by the government. Despite the 35 years of war and the threat of war, Israeli citizens speak freely, the press is free, and harsh attacks and criticism of government policies are frequent, indeed increasing. There has been no attempt to suppress that criticism, by the government or by any political movement.

Israel has a flourishing peace movement, with extremely broad appeal. It educates for compromise and negotiation, and for surrendering the West Bank to some competent Palestinian authority. Sadly, it has no counterparts in the Arab world, nor can it even find Arabs willing to negotiate. It is therefore reduced to reacting to events, to protest and demonstrations. Reasonably, the vast majority of Israelis simply cannot take the enormous risk involved if they were to become more vulnerable by returning land to their sworn enemies. But were that to change, were there to be a peace thrust by the Arabs, the Israeli peace movement would not only be able to present a viable program, it would literally sweep the country.

I opposed Israeli settlements on the West Bank when begun by the Labor governments, and I oppose the present intensified settlement policy even more. But I am under no illusions that that policy is the bar to negotiations. The Arabs do use it as a propaganda tool and as an excuse, but there were no negotiations before there were any settlements, before Begin's accelerated settlement program - and there are none now. Actually, as more and more people become convinced that the present policy is aimed at de facto, if not de jure, permanent Israeli control of the West Bank, and that the settlements are steps toward that goal, many Palestinians on the West Bank have concluded that unless there are negotiations soon the West Bank will be lost to them for the foreseeable future. So, we are now <sup>hearing about</sup> ~~seeing~~ increased pressure from West Bank Palestinians for peace and for negotiations.

In this situation, Prime Minister Begin, by virtue of his charisma and the conviction he conveys that he will not yield on issues that involve Israel's very existence, is personally more popular than ever before. While there is a strong desire for peace among Israelis, there is also strong feeling that the Arabs will simply not accept the existence of a Jewish state. As a result, <sup>negotiations of</sup> the Israeli people agree with Begin's hard line approach, at least in the present situation. Given these facts, I see no possibility of, indeed no reason for, Israel undertaking the dramatic initiative required. Any government which acted to weaken Israel's security would be quickly ~~overthrown~~. <sup>doesn't fit.</sup> voted out of office

Can the PLO undertake such an initiative? Even less likely than Israel. The February 1983 meeting of the Palestinian National Council did nothing to alter the covenant, which calls only for armed struggle to destroy the Israeli state. While the extremists in the PLO may be a minority, they obviously have a veto power on

Beyond that, Issam Sartawi was not even allowed to speak.

*may want add something*  
*about Syrian rejection.* Rustin 4

such fundamental issues. There may be moderates in the PLO who are willing to accept Israel - perhaps Yasir Arafat is among them (if so, he has carefully avoided making that clear). But there is nothing they can do against that veto power. The recent shuttling by Arafat among his factions and to and from Amman, ending in rejection of a Jordanian role in negotiations, is ample evidence of that veto power. And Hussein's charge that Arafat reneged on an agreement, is evidence, if true, that Arafat is not the decisive voice.

In any case, I seriously doubt that the PLO can be anything but a terrorist military organization. It was created by the Arab League for that purpose, and for 19 years that is the basis on which it recruited and still recruits its membership. And that is the basis on which it receives support from the Arab states. The kinds of people attracted to such an endeavor, the years of battle and frustration, the rigid rejection of any settlement short of a PLO victory, seems to me to have developed within the PLO an attitude, a character, which makes it extremely unlikely that it can be transformed into an instrument of negotiation or of civic administration. The years of PLO residence in Jordan led to Black September in 1970. The years of PLO domination in southern Lebanon led to civil war in 1975 and 1976, to "amour, and finally to expulsion. In both cases, while claiming to seek haven, the PLO behaved in such a manner that the local civilian population was overjoyed to see them go. The PLO ruled in Lebanon by violence, theft, and terror, and could not deal humanely and decently with a civilian population under its control. I have grave doubts whether, if a Palestinian entity eventually comes to pass, the PLO would be a suitable instrument for its governance. In any case, it is clear that, at the present time, one cannot look to the PLO for that dramatic initiative needed.

Jordan? Also highly unlikely. A weak and fragile monarchy, Jordan has made it clear that it would not, indeed could not, act on its own. It had to have clearance from the PLO. On a recent trip ~~with~~ with a delegation of the Socialist International, headed by Mario Soares of Portugal, we met with Crown Prince , King Hussein's brother. And he helped us to understand that the PLO has a veto over what Jordan does, that the ~~left wing~~ *hard liners, or rejectionists* of the PLO has a veto over what the PLO does, and that in effect, the ~~left wing~~ of the PLO has a veto over what the Arab states do with respect to Israel.

There is also some question as to whether King Hussein is at all anxious to reassert sovereignty over the West Bank - a sovereignty achieved by war in 1948 and never recognized by the Arab states. The fractious Palestinians would be only a source of subversion, unrest, and upheaval. Does the Jordanian Army really want that responsibility? Particularly when there are many Palestinians on the West Bank who regard Jordan as the villain of Black September, in which they lost friends and relatives. There are <sup>also</sup> many West Bankers, and I spoke with some, who view Jordan as their most likely hope for ending the Israeli occupation. So, at best, Jordan can expect only a mixed reception. All these circumstances combine to make Jordan a very unlikely candidate to undertake that initiative.

Where does that leave us? The only remaining direct actors are the <sup>other</sup> Arab states. And here we must separate the rejectionists from the so-called moderates (I adopt for this piece the convention that the pro-Western or anti-Soviet Arab states are moderate, although I find very little evidence of that in their social, economic, or governmental structures or in their attitude toward Israel). There is no prospect at all that the rejectionists, which include Iraq, Syria, Lybia, and others (with non-Arab Iran certainly also a force), would undertake such an initiative. It is precisely what they are adamant in opposing. Which leaves us with the moderates, meaning essentially Jordan and Saudi Arabia. I have already discussed Jordan, so now must deal with Saudi Arabia.

But before I go into that, I would like to take up the problem of the Palestinian refugees. It is clear, to me at least, that the failure of the Arab states to accept Israel's existence does not arise from outrage over the plight of the Palestinian refugees, a status they have suffered for some 35 years. Save for Jordan, no Arab state has offered them citizenship nor has acted to absorb them into the local population. Indeed, I am convinced that the Arab states have deliberately prolonged the refugee status of those unhappy Palestinians in order to have a propaganda tool to use against Israel. Had they had any real desire to ease their plight, they would have absorbed them long ago, or come to terms with Israel so that permanent arrangements could have been made for their resettlement.

And here we come to the crux of the matter. The fact is that the Arab states are united only on non-recognition of Israel. Egypt broke that unity, and was punished for it. They look upon Israel as an intolerable intruder into what should be an Arab sea. Since some 30-odd conflicts between Arab states have been identified since World War II, involving practically every Arab state and not Israel in any way, this may be the only thing they have been united on. These conflicts, to name a

Lebanon has already been warned that unity &

few, include Iran/Iraq, Syria/Jordan, Yemen/South Yemen, Egypt/Lybia, and Lybia/Chad. Even Muslimism seems not, with the rise of Khomeinism, to be a unifying force.

*Check - is this a word?*

It is that unified opposition to Israel which must be broken, if there is to be any end to the Arab/Israeli conflict. The Arab states did not accept the UN decision to establish the State of Israel, not then and not now. The wars began because of that refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Israel, and they will not end until that changes. That is the essence of the dramatic initiative needed, and the only possible source for it is Saudi Arabia!

Obviously, Saudi Arabia will not undertake that step unless and until it sees no other alternative. I believe that, in the long run, its stability depends on it making that move. Just as my respect and admiration for Israel has led me on many occasions to be critical of Israeli actions which I believed were not in Israel's interests in the long run, so I am now recommending what may be a difficult course for Saudi Arabia to pursue, and my urging springs from my view of what is ultimately in its own interest.

*implies that you also have respect for Saudi Arabia.*

Besides its intrinsic opposition to Israel's existence, Saudi Arabia, with its fragile regime, has two additional fears which make recognition of Israel difficult. First is fear of PLO terrorism, subversion, and sabotage. Concomitant with recognition of Israel must be rejection of the PLO as the Arab instrument, and cessation of financial and other support. Most observers agree that the massive funds supplied to the PLO by Saudi Arabia are a payoff to avoid terrorist activities directed against the House of Saud. The PLO ~~will~~<sup>would</sup> not take rejection lightly, and there is every likelihood that Saudi Arabia would be added to Israel as an object of PLO wrath. But at the moment the PLO is weaker than it has been in years, and taking that step now may very well be less costly than later, when the PLO would be rebuilt with Saudi and Soviet help. Israel has suffered from PLO terrorism for years, but has survived and has found that the terror and sabotage, while painful and psychologically almost unbearable, are no real challenges to its stability. Terrorism is peripheral, a painful testing but not a real threat to the established order. Saudi Arabia would have to be willing to assume a comparable risk.

There is another reason for Arab fear, perhaps even stronger than PLO vengeance. That is Khomeinism. Muslim fundamentalism is growing rapidly, and while not all of it is Shi'ite, the term Khomeinism is used to describe it. While I was in

*order - was event to a threat to established order in Jordan & Lebanon*

Tunisia with the Socialist International delegation, we were taken by the Prime Minister to a place where we could overlook a large courtyard. Within that area some 3,000 students, from law, medicine, engineering and other faculties of the university, were caught up in the throes of Muslim fundamentalism, flogging themselves and working themselves up to a frenzy of religious fervor. That, the Prime Minister told us, was what he feared if Tunisia were to recognize Israel. The fact that the elites of the Arab countries are being engulfed by religious fervor is what frightens their leaders. And they should be frightened, for it is a real problem. But they are not coping with it now, and it is growing. The longer the delay in meeting the challenge, the stronger will be Khomeinism. And no Muslim country is immune, particularly not Saudi Arabia, which seems to be passively awaiting the onslaught.

Perhaps they are waiting in the hope that the deluge will come after them. It may, but it will be visited on their heirs in that case. If we extrapolate from present trends, the longer the delay the stronger will be Khomeinism. So, as in the case of the PLO, a confrontation now may be less costly in the long run. Surely, there must be some causes outside religion which foster such fundamentalism. And surely these ought to be investigated and actions taken to correct such stimuli. For the Saudi's own sake, they ought to be encouraged to take whatever steps are possible now to hold back that tide, which they fear will someday engulf them and which indeed will if they remain passive. That is their responsibility.

*se needs to be updated*  
 Here we must deal primarily with what U.S. policy should be. At the moment, the U.S. is in a confrontation mode with Israel, primarily over its slowness in leaving Lebanon (a problem which may have been solved) and ~~over~~ the rapidity with which it is planting settlements on the West Bank. I have no problem with continued U.S. pressure on Israel on these issues. But it seems to me to be a serious error to conduct that pressure in a hostile mode. *Please just be on Israel* It is bound to be counterproductive, as the confrontational mode has been with other allies when used in the past. It will rally Israelis behind those leaders they see protecting Israeli security and sovereignty, and will harden the Israeli conviction that it must itself decide what is in its own best interest and that it cannot accept a diktat, not even from its best friend, the United States. For another, and even more important reason, it is wrong because it makes visible U.S. policy, but directed against the wrong target. It misleads the Arabs and diverts them from their own responsibilities in the conflict. Our emphasis should be on the need for the Arab states to understand that only they can end the conflict, and that they must come to the conclusion that the only way to do that is by a simple, unequivocal declaration that they are willing to recognize

*Paragraph is redundant.*

Israel and to live with it. We must make clear that the Arab non-recognition policy has not only brought constant war and unrest throughout the region, it has not achieved its goals and cannot achieve its goals. It has led to the PLO and it fosters Khomeinism.

We ought to be advising Saudi Arabia that it would do better to face the threats of the PLO and Khomeinism now, while these forces are weaker than they will be in the future, and we ought to let them know that we would be willing to help them reduce such civic disorder. The munitions we now sell to Saudi Arabia are useless to them for the real problems they face, as proven in Iran. Far better that their funds be spent on social benefits which might strengthen their fragile regimes and might serve as a counter to PLO and Khomeinist violence.

What would Arab recognition of Israel, within secure and recognized borders, mean? It would mean ~~upheaval~~ <sup>Wrong word</sup> in Israel - a whole new ball game. Just as they reacted to Sadat's initiative in 1977, I believe the Israelis would erupt with ebullience to such an Arab initiative. There would be nationwide debate and discussion, the peace strength would gain enormously, and things thought rigidly closed would suddenly be seen as open and flexible. There would be a new climate in which ~~many~~ matters previously deemed non-negotiable would suddenly be open to adjustment. Any government which wanted to continue to govern would have to be responsive to that new mood. Land could be surrendered, negotiations possible, and true Palestinian autonomy could be accepted.

I believe there would be a comparable reaction among Palestinian West Bankers. Once the possibility of ending Israeli occupation became visible and real, I believe they would be willing to work politically toward that goal. Arrangements would become possible for the Palestinian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. A number of these could return to the West Bank, the others could be resettled. The MidEast nightmare could end. > *this is probably not true. this is too optimistic*

Since the Soviet Union has, from 1947 on, always supported the recognition of the State of Israel, they would have to applaud the move, at least in public. They would find it difficult to justify selling arms to terrorist groups which rejected the settlement - there will surely be some, and they would have some problems among their rejectionist client states. The Soviet Union would certainly be unhappy about having been excluded from the international conference which it had depended upon to end the conflict, and in which they <sup>had</sup> counted on playing an important role, leading to

Rustin - 9

the extension of their influence in the MidEast. On the whole, they might be unhappy about the way the settlement was achieved, with heightened<sup>en</sup> U.S. prestige, ~~but~~ and no gains for them.

*extraneous*  
A settlement in the MidEast would have a profound effect on the United Nations as a institution. Ever since the PLO and the various liberation movements began to use the UN as a channel with which to chastise Israel, that institution has fallen into disarray. It has been increasingly bypassed on matters of moment, and has lost credibility as a viable international institution. Once the MidEast conflict is removed from its agenda, the major source of friction will be gone and there would be a strong possibility that the UN could regain its prestige and could begin to function as it was once hoped it would.

What are the chances for a settlement in the MidEast sparked by such a dramatic initiative from Saudi Arabia? Miniscule, if not less. But what has the U.S. to gain from following a policy which does not deal with the central problem, indeed which misdirects our energy and resources? Israeli ~~so-called intransigence, irritating as it may be,~~ is not the cause of the conflict. The central, original, and abiding cause is Arab refusal to recognize Israel. It was that refusal which led to the Arab attack on Israel in 1948, and it is that continued refusal which keeps the area inflamed and at war or the threat of war. There can be no peaceful resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict without that recognition. That is where U.S. policy ought to be directed. The hopes that such a policy would be successful are indeed slender. But what is the alternative?



May 10, 1983

To: Readers of the Rustin Report on Israel

From: Charles Bloomstein

-----  
Attached is what I hope is the penultimate draft of this report.

It was composed rather hastily and as a result has several awkward passages. I would appreciate any suggestions you might give me with respect to language and construction, as well as any substantive matters.

Also, the piece is as yet untitled. Any ideas?

Draft

Untitled Report on the MidEast  
by Bayard Rustin

The recently concluded agreement between Lebanon and Israel for the withdrawal of Israeli troops is certainly an extremely important step forward, and the U.S. negotiators, Secretary of State Schultz, Philip Habib, and Morris Draper, are to be highly commended for their excellent work. At the time of this writing, the Lebanese Parliament has not yet approved the arrangements, and certainly there is grave doubt about whether the Syrians will also agree to withdraw, a necessary step if the agreement is to be implemented. So, much still hangs in the balance, despite this important step forward.

What I would like to stress here, however, is that the agreement between Israel and Lebanon is peripheral to the main issue in the MidEast and progress there does not necessarily mean that peace is imminent. Many Arabs have held that the ability to arrange an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon was to be looked upon as a signal of Israeli intentions, and that the Lebanese arrangement was a necessary precondition to any real discussions leading to an end of the Arab/Israeli war. My own feeling is that that was a ploy to delay basic negotiations. We shall see.

Presumably, President Reagan's peace plan is still on the table. Whether or not it is the only way to go is debatable. However, there being no alternate plan, it seems to me that the Reagan plan should be pressed. Even if not the final road to a settlement, travelling down it a bit might give us some new perspectives and some new openings. So, I have no problem with our government continuing to pressure the participants to implement the process. But I do feel quite strongly that we are not pressuring the right parties - that our aim is misdirected.

I am convinced that the MidEast situation presents us with a true Gordian knot. Intertwined with many issues not directly connected with Israel, the complexities defy untangling and attempts to unravel it bit by bit will be fruitless. It must be cut with one simple, swift, well-aimed stroke. And that can be accomplished only by one of the antagonists. What is needed now is a unilateral initiative of major scope, comparable to Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977. That changed the entire context of Egyptian-Israeli relations and made possible what had not been even remotely considered before. What is needed now is another such stroke.

Rustin - 2

But when I look at the various actors directly concerned, I am struck by the improbability of that happening, by the enormous odds against it. Left to themselves, none of the actors will, or can, move from their frozen positions. But possibly one of the actors can be pressured to take such an initiative. And that is where I believe that U.S. policy should be directed - to facilitate and encourage a bold new initiative that will change the entire context within which the MidEast is now mired.

Can Israel be brought to offer such an initiative? I find that extremely unlikely, regardless of pressure. After 35 searing years of unremitting terrorism, war, and preparation for war, Israel feels in its bones, whether rightly or wrongly, that the entire Arab world, save Egypt, is out to destroy it. How could they feel otherwise, when they had continuously tried to negotiate peace and could find not a single Arab country willing to deal with it, until 1977? And when that country, Egypt, appeared, it was excommunicated by the rest of the Arab world. Despite ambiguous hints that it no longer means what it says, Israel simply must take the Palestinian National Covenant at face value. It has never been altered since the Rabat conference in 1974, not even at the Fez meetings in 1982. It still calls for the destruction of the State of Israel, to be achieved solely through armed struggle. So, to whom can Israel offer an initiative, even if it wished to?

Despite these terrible pressures, Israel has somehow maintained its basic democracy and morality. What other nation do we know that has fared as well in these areas under literally seige conditions? Take a look at those countries dealing with insurgency and terrorism and see if you can identify any which has done as well. So, I believe Israel's dedication to democracy is exemplary, even though I can find reason from time to time to be critical of its behavior in specific situations. But the essence of democracy remains substantially intact. Note the recent protest demonstration in Tel Aviv, called by those opposed to the government's policies in Lebanon and attended by some 10% of the population. Surely that demonstration was instrumental in forcing the government to shift and to appoint a judicial commission to examine its possible complicity in the Sabra and Shatila refugees camp massacres. And the report of that judicial commission was highly critical <sup>of</sup> ~~and~~ very senior army and government officials, charging them with serious errors of omission and lapses of exercise of responsibility - a finding that was general accepted as sound by the Israelis, even if reluctantly accepted by the government. Despite the 35 years of war and the threat of war, Israeli citizens speak freely, the press is free, and harsh attacks and criticism of government policies are frequent, indeed increasing. There has been no attempt to suppress that criticism, by the government or by any political movement.

Rustin - 3

Israel has a flourishing peace movement, with extremely broad appeal. It educates for compromise and negotiation, and for surrendering the West Bank to some competent Palestinian authority. Sadly, it has no counterparts in the Arab world, nor can it even find Arabs willing to negotiate. It is therefore reduced to reacting to events, to protest and demonstrations. Reasonably, the vast majority of Israelis simply cannot take the enormous risk involved if they were to become more vulnerable by returning land to their sworn enemies. But were that to change, were there to be a peace thrust by the Arabs, the Israeli peace movement would not only be able to present a viable program, it would literally sweep the country.

I opposed Israeli settlements on the West Bank when begun by the Labor governments, and I oppose the present intensified settlement policy even more. But I am under no illusions that that policy is the bar to negotiations. The Arabs do use it as a propaganda tool and as an excuse, but there were no negotiations before there were any settlements, before Begin's accelerated settlement program - and there are none now. Actually, as more and more people become convinced that the present policy is aimed at de facto, if not de jure, permanent Israeli control of the West Bank, and that the settlements are steps toward that goal, many Palestinians on the West Bank have concluded that unless there are negotiations soon the West Bank will be lost to them for the foreseeable future. So, we are now seeing increased pressure from West Bank Palestinians for peace and for negotiations.

In this situation, Prime Minister Begin, by virtue of his charisma and the conviction he conveys that he will not yield on issues that involve Israel's very existence, is personally more popular than ever before. While there is a strong desire for peace among Israelis, there is also strong feeling that the Arabs will simply not accept the existence of a Jewish state. As a result, the Israeli people agree with Begin's hard line approach, at least in the present situation. Given these facts, I see no possibility of, indeed no reason for, Israel undertaking the dramatic initiative required. Any government which acted to weaken Israel's security would be quickly overthrown.

Can the PLO undertake such an initiative? Even less likely than Israel. The February 1983 meeting of the Palestinian National Council did nothing to alter the covenant, which calls only for armed struggle to destroy the Israeli state. While the extremists in the PLO may be a minority, they obviously have a veto power on

such fundamental issues. There may be moderates in the PLO who are willing to accept Israel - perhaps Yasir Arafat is among them (if so, he has carefully avoided making that clear). But there is nothing they can do against that veto power. The recent shuttling by Arafat among his factions and to and from Amman, ending in rejection of a Jordanian role in negotiations, is ample evidence of that veto power. And Hussein's charge that Arafat reneged on an agreement, is evidence, if true, that Arafat<sup>1</sup> is not the decisive voice.

In any case, I seriously doubt that the PLO can be anything but a terrorist military organization. It was created by the Arab League for that purpose, and for 19 years that is the basis on which it recruited and still recruits its membership. And that is the basis on which it receives support from the Arab states. The kinds of people attracted to such an endeavor, the years of battle and frustration, the rigid rejection of any settlement short of a PLO victory, seems to me to have developed within the PLO an attitude, a character, which makes it extremely unlikely that it can be transformed into an instrument of negotiation or of civic administration. The years of PLO residence in Jordan led to Black September in 1970. The years of PLO domination in southern Lebanon led to civil war in 1975 and 1976, to "amour, and finally to expulsion. In both cases, while claiming to seek haven, the PLO behaved in such a manner that the local civilian population was overjoyed to see them go. The PLO ruled in Lebanon by violence, theft, and terror, and could not deal humanely and decently with a civilian population under its control. I have grave doubts whether, if a Palestinian entity eventually comes to pass, the PLO would be a suitable instrument for its governance. In any case, it is clear that, at the present time, one cannot look to the PLO for that dramatic initiative needed.

Jordan? Also highly unlikely. A weak and fragile monarchy, Jordan has made it clear that it would not, indeed could not, act on its own. It had to have clearance from the PLO. On a recent trip ~~with~~ with a delegation of the Socialist International, headed by Mario Soares of Portugal, we met with Crown Prince , King Hussein's brother. And he helped us to understand that the PLO has a veto over what Jordan does, that the left wing of the PLO has a veto over what the PLO does, and that in effect, the left wing of the PLO has a veto over what the Arab states do with respect to Israel.

Rustin - 5

There is also some question as to whether King Hussein is at all anxious to reassert sovereignty over the West Bank - a sovereignty achieved by war in 1948 and never recognized by the Arab states. The fractious Palestinians would be only a source of subversion, unrest, and upheaval. Does the Jordanian Army really want that responsibility? Particularly when there are many Palestinians on the West Bank who regard Jordan as the villain of Black September, in which they lost friends and relatives. There are <sup>also</sup> many West Bankers, and I spoke with some, who view Jordan as their most likely hope for ending the Israeli occupation. So, at best, Jordan can expect only a mixed reception. All these circumstances combine to make Jordan a very unlikely candidate to undertake that initiative.

Where does that leave us? The only remaining direct actors are the Arab states. And here we must separate the rejectionists from the so-called moderates (I adopt for this piece the convention that the pro-Western or anti-Soviet Arab states are moderate, although I find very little evidence of that in their social, economic, or governmental structures or in their attitude toward Israel). There is no prospect at all that the rejectionists, which include Iraq, Syria, Lybia, and others (with non-Arab Iran certainly also a force), would undertake such an initiative. It is precisely what they are adamant in opposing. Which leaves us with the moderates, meaning essentially Jordan and Saudi Arabia. I have already discussed Jordan, so now must deal with Saudi Arabia.

But before I go into that, I would like to take up the problem of the Palestinian refugees. It is clear, to me at least, that the failure of the Arab states to accept Israel's existence does not arise from outrage over the plight of the Palestinian refugees, a status they have suffered for some 35 years. Save for Jordan, no Arab state has offered them citizenship nor has acted to absorb them into the local population. Indeed, I am convinced that the Arab states have deliberately prolonged the refugee status of those unhappy Palestinians in order to have a propaganda tool to use against Israel. Had they had any real desire to ease their plight, they would have absorbed them long ago, or come to terms with Israel so that permanent arrangements could have been made for their resettlement.

And here we come to the crux of the matter. The fact is that the Arab states are united only on non-recognition of Israel. Egypt broke that unity, and was punished for it. They look upon Israel as an intolerable intruder into what should be an Arab sea. Since some 30-odd conflicts between Arab states have been identified since World War II, involving practically every Arab state, and not Israel in any way, this may be the only thing they have been united on. These conflicts, to name a

Rustin - 6

few, include Iran/Iraq, Syria/Jordan, Yemen/South Yemen, Egypt/Lybia, and Lybia/Chad. Even Muslimism seems not, with the rise of Khomeinism, to be a unifying force.

It is that unified opposition to Israel which must be broken, if there is to be any end to the Arab/Israeli conflict. The Arab states did not accept the UN decision to establish the State of Israel, not then and not now. The wars began because of that refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Israel, and they will not end until that changes. That is the essence of the dramatic initiative needed, and the only possible source for it is Saudi Arabia!

Obviously, Saudi Arabia will not undertake that step unless and until it sees no other alternative. I believe that, in the long run, its stability depends on it making that move. Just as my respect and admiration for Israel has led me on many occasions to be critical of Israeli actions which I believed were not in Israel's interests in the long run, so I am now recommending what may be a difficult course for Saudi Arabia to pursue, and my urging springs from my view of what is ultimately in its own interest.

Besides its intrinsic opposition to Israel's existence, Saudi Arabia, with its fragile regime, has two additional fears which make recognition of Israel difficult. First is fear of PLO terrorism, subversion, and sabotage. Concomitant with recognition of Israel must be rejection of the PLO as the Arab instrument, and cessation of financial and other support. Most observers agree that the massive funds supplied to the PLO by Saudi Arabia are a payoff to avoid terrorist activities directed against the House of Saud. The PLO <sup>would</sup> ~~will~~ not take rejection lightly, and there is every likelihood that Saudi Arabia would be added to Israel as an object of PLO wrath. But at the moment the PLO is weaker than it has been in years, and taking that step now may very well be less costly than later, when the PLO would be rebuilt with Saudi and Soviet help. Israel has suffered from PLO terrorism for years, but has survived and has found that the terror and sabotage, while painful and psychologically almost unbearable, are no real challenges to its stability. Terrorism is peripheral, a painful testing but not a real threat to the established order. Saudi Arabia would have to be willing to assume a comparable risk.

There is another reason for Arab fear, perhaps even stronger than PLO vengeance. That is Khomeinism. Muslim fundamentalism is growing rapidly, and while not all of it is Shi'ite, the term Khomeinism is used to describe it. While I was in

Rustin - 6

many other, Iran vs. Iraq, Yemen vs North Yemen, Egypt vs Lybia, Lybia vs  
Chad, Jordan vs Syria,



Rustin - 7

Tunisia with the Socialist International delegation, we were taken by the Prime Minister to a place where we could overlook a large courtyard. Within that area some 3,000 students, from law, medicine, engineering and other faculties of the university, were caught up in the throes of Muslim fundamentalism, flogging themselves and working themselves up to a frenzy of religious fervor. That, the Prime Minister told us, was what he feared if Tunisia were to recognize Israel. The fact that the elites of the Arab countries are being engulfed by religious fervor is what frightens their leaders. And they should be frightened, for it is a real problem. But they are not coping with it now, and it is growing. The longer the delay in meeting the challenge, the stronger will be Khomeinism. And no Muslim country is immune, particularly not Saudi Arabia, which seems to be passively awaiting the onslaught.

Perhaps they are waiting in the hope that the deluge will come after them. It may, but it will be visited on their heirs in that case. If we extrapolate from present trends, the longer the delay the stronger will be Khomeinism. So, as in the case of the PLO, a confrontation now may be less costly in the long run. Surely, there must be some causes outside religion which foster such fundamentalism. And surely these ought to be investigated and actions taken to correct such stimuli. For the Saudi's own sake, they ought to be encouraged to take whatever steps are possible now to hold back that tide, which they fear will someday engulf them and which indeed will if they remain passive. *That is their responsibility.*

Here we must deal primarily with what U.S. policy should be. At the moment, the U.S. is in a confrontation mode with Israel, primarily over its slowness in leaving Lebanon (a problem which may have been solved) and over the rapidity with which it is planting settlements on the West Bank. I have no problem with continued U.S. pressure on Israel on these issues. But it seems to me to be a serious error to conduct that pressure in a hostile mode. It is bound to be counterproductive, as the confrontational mode has been with other allies when used in the past. It will rally Israelis behind those leaders they see protecting Israeli security and sovereignty, and will harden the Israeli conviction that it must itself decide what is in its own best interest and that it cannot accept a diktat, not even from its best friend, the United States. For another, and even more important reason, it is wrong because it makes visible U.S. policy, but directed against the wrong target. It misleads the Arabs and diverts them from their own responsibilities in the conflict. Our emphasis should be on the need for the Arab states to understand that only they can end the conflict, and that they must come to the conclusion that the only way to do that is by a simple, unequivocal declaration that they are willing to recognize

Rusin - 8

Israel and to live with it. We must make clear that the Arab non-recognition policy has not only brought constant war and unrest throughout the region, it has not achieved its goals and cannot achieve its goals. It has led to the PLO and it fosters Khomeinism.

We ought to be advising Saudi Arabia that it would do better to face the threats of the PLO and Khomeinism now, while these forces are weaker than they will be in the future, and we ought to let them know that we would be willing to help them ~~face~~ such civic disorder. The munitions we now sell to Saudi Arabia are useless to them for the real problems they face, as proven in Iran. Far better that their funds be spent on social benefits which might strengthen their fragile regimes and might serve as a counter to PLO and Komeiniist violence.

What would Arab recognition of Israel, within secure and recognized borders, mean? It would mean upheaval in Israel - a whole new ball game. Just as they reacted to Sadat's initiative in 1977, I believe the Israelis would erupt with ebullience to such an Arab initiative. There would be nationwide debate and discussion, the peace strength would gain enormously, and things thought rigidly closed would suddenly be seen as open and flexible. There would be a new climate in which ~~many~~ matters previously deemed non-negotiable would suddenly be open to adjustment. Any government which wanted to continue to govern would have to be responsive to that new mood. Land could be surrendered, negotiations possible, and true Palestinian autonomy could be accepted.

I believe there would be a comparable reaction among Palestinian West Bankers. Once the possibility of ending Israeli occupation became visible and real, I believe they would be willing to work politically toward that goal. Arrangements would become possible for the Palestinian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. A number of these could return to the West Bank, the others could be resettled. The MidEast nightmare could end.

Since the Soviet Union has, from 1947 on, always supported the recognition of the State of Israel, they would have to applaud the move, at least in public. They would find it difficult to justify selling arms to terrorist groups which rejected the settlement - there will surely be some, and they would have some problems among their rejectionist client states. The Soviet Union would certainly be unhappy about having been excluded from the international conference which it had depended upon to end the conflict, and in which they <sup>had</sup> counted on playing an important role, leading to

Rustin - 9

the extension of their influence in the MidEast. On the whole, they might be unhappy about the way the settlement was achieved, with heightened<sup>en</sup> U.S. prestige, ~~and~~ and no gains for them.

A settlement in the MidEast would have a profound effect on the United Nations as a institution. Ever since the PLO and the various liberation movements began to use the UN as a channel with which to chastise Israel, that institution has fallen into disarray. It has been increasingly bypassed on matters of moment, and has lost credibility as a viable international institution. Once the MidEast conflict is removed from its agenda, the major source of friction will be gone and there would be a strong possibility that the UN could regain its prestige and could begin to function as it was once hoped it would.

What are the chances for a settlement in the MidEast sparked by such a dramatic initiative from Saudi Arabia? Miniscule, if not less. But what has the U.S. to gain from following a policy which does not deal with the central problem, indeed which misdirects our energy and resources? Israeli so-called intransigence, irritating as it may be, is not the cause of the conflict. The central, original, and abiding cause is Arab refusal to recognize Israel. It was that refusal which led to the Arab attack on Israel in 1948, and it is that continued refusal which keeps the area inflamed and at war or the threat of war. There can be no peaceful resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict without that recognition. That is where U.S. policy ought to be directed. The hopes that such a policy would be successful are indeed slender. But what is the alternative?